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"And what rough beast its hour come round at last . . ."—*William Butler Yeats*

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Identical Mirrors

Placed Opposite Each Other in a Hall

by Emma Swan



When two mirrors darkly regarding each other
See themselves and each other to a dot,
Could they, even so, not
Recognize and admire through the smother

Of reflected light, love? or are the images
So intermingled as to obscure such a possibility:
Their efforts tending merely towards multiplicity
Of composition, uninspired by advantages

Possibly to be gained—such as gazing in the end
On a cool and God-planned paradise
Where sun shines whitely—by a wiser device?
Or would they claim to have found it as they bend

To infinity their way? See in this surmise
That each coldly reflects in the other, reflects
The other, to a point where identity conflicts
With invisibility and the total of hopeful eyes.

The Odyssey of Contemporary Spanish Poetry

by *Bernardo Clariana*



SPANISH poetry is the truest mirror of the Spanish people. In order to penetrate to the center of the Spanish maze no thread of Ariadne could guide us so well as Spanish verse. Let us reject from the start the attitude of a curious tourist toward Spain. My people deserve the intense interest of an Oedipus questioning the Sphinx rather than the casual glance of the moviegoer in search of the Carmenesque Spain of *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. The author of these lines, a Loyalist in exile, for whom Spain is now no more than the outline of a bullskin on the map, can best conjure up its image in the crystal of its poetry. May the reader therefore pardon any element of feverishness that may appear in this essay. Before you enter the maze of Spain we will say to you, like the mysterious mariner of an old Spanish ballad of the fifteenth century: "I will sing my song only to him who goes with me."

What is the song of the Spanish people today? What poetry are Spanish poets actually writing? What is the meaning of contemporary Spanish verse?¹ First, it can be said that our poetry is contemporary in every sense. In the second place, there is nothing in it of the picturesque or merely curious. Third, our contemporary poets stand the test of translation, and, rendered into any language, preserve their human value and their individual

¹ This brief essay refers only to events of the Spanish diaspora up to the year 1939; during the six years since then I have received only scattered and fragmentary information.

fascination. Dispense, in one of our poems, with rhyme, alter the accents, translate the words, avoid anything idiomatic and, if anything remains, if it speaks to the heart, you can be sure that the poem exists. Through this ordeal by fire the Spanish poets of today pass and are not consumed in the process.

The period of the establishment of the Republic, or the year 1931, saw a flowering of poetry unrivalled since the Golden Age of Spanish literature—the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. The full maturity of the masters, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Antonio Machado and Miguel de Unamuno, coincided with the brilliant vitality of the young men such as Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Emilio Prados, Vicente Aleixandre, Manuel Altolaguirre and Luis Cernuda. Between these two groups stands the generation, intermediate both as to age and as to literary development, of Pedro Salinas, Jorge Guillén and León Felipe. And pressing on their heels came an even younger generation, early matured by the fires of the Civil War, a multiple and disparate group—among whom I have the honor to count myself—whose spirited leader Miguel Hernández would, had he survived, be my own age, thirty-two. Like a new Rubén Darío,² the Chilean Pablo Neruda, who was at that time living in Madrid, influenced this last generation of Spanish poets with his exasperated and violent romanticism and intense preoccupation with social questions, astride his surrealist-romantic and circus-like *Caballo Verde de Poesia* ("Green Horse of Poetry")—the title of his Madrid review. This unity, in poetry, of Spain and Spanish-America was further emphasized by the writer César Vallejo, who was to join us irrevocably and to die with us on Good Friday of 1938. That same Good Friday Franco's troops reached the sea at Castellón de la Plana, thus achieving the crucifixion of Spain.

These are the names. And the men? The *condition humaine* of our poets is shown in a common fate. Federico García Lorca died before a firing squad in Granada at the outset of the Civil War;

² The Nicaraguan poet of the last third of the 19th century.

Miguel de Unamuno died in Salamanca "among his enemies, men who with their cries of *To death with Intelligence!* sought his death and "killed" him deliberately or accidentally with their stupid deeds and insulting propositions."³ Antonio Machado, our greatest elegiac poet, also died, on the 19th of February, 1939, in a small French village near the Pyrenees, unable to survive the suffering of the exodus, a few days after the crossing of the frontier. Miguel Hernández recently died in a prison of Alicante. Juan Ramón Jiménez, Pedro Salinas and Jorge Guillén are in exile in the United States, teaching in various universities, and all the rest of the poets mentioned earlier, with the exception of Vicente Aleixandre, are exiled and living in different countries, chiefly in Mexico. This is Spanish poetry today. Its essential quality is expressed, better even than in the verse itself, in the fate of death, prison and exile which has been the lot of its poets.

* * *

The poetry of the first generation of this century may be triangulated by the landmarks of Juan Ramón Jiménez, Antonio Machado and Miguel de Unamuno, our three great pioneers. Beauty, nostalgia for the past, and death, respectively, are the central themes of these three poets.

The phenomenon known as *modernismo*⁴ made no impression on Spanish poetry, or at any rate was limited to problems of form, because of the importance in Spain of tradition and restraint—two elements which do not go well with the Frenchified and Ver-saillist medley of the modernists. In Spain it was not necessary to twist the neck of any alabaster swan. The French symbol in the manner of Albert Samain and the limpid music of Verlaine en-

³ cf. Domenchina, *Antología de la poesía española contemporánea*, p. 137.

⁴ Poetic revolution brought about in the last third of the 19th century by Rubén Darío. He broke away from traditional Romanticism, and introduced a host of new rhymes adapted from French metres and from Classical Antiquity. He inaugurated the vogue for exoticism and the preference for French Symbolist tastes: paganism and Catholicism in dramatic confusion. (Cf. Rubén Darío, *Elogio a Verlaine*).

tered Spain in due course through Juan Ramón Jiménez, whose Spanish keynote, of mystic ancestry, is *la musica callada* and *la soledad sonora*—"the silent music" and "sounding solitude." These two phrases, and recollection of El Greco's "Man with Hand on Breast" or of one of the mourners at the "Burial of Count Orgaz," may serve to paint an imaginary portrait of the major Spanish lyricist of today.

Juan Ramón Jiménez is the great "purifier" of our poetry; he descends directly from Góngora, the poet of sensations, and from the major Romantic Spanish poets of the nineteenth century, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer and Rosalía de Castro. Woman—poetry is the great equation of Jiménez' verse, which is full of hallucinatory associations such as: woman—flower, things—women, music—flower. (*La musica / mujer desnuda / corriendo loca / por la noche pura*. "Music / naked woman / running wildly / through the pure night.") Juan Ramón Jiménez is the absence of, and longing for, woman. He has an extraordinary Romantic hyper-esthesia, a sensibility which feminizes and transposes a perfume into a color or sound in a hallucinatory manner. From the rose he draws a lesson contrary to that of our classic poets, who saw in this flower a Senecan example of *de brevitae vitae*. As a spiritual hedonist, Juan Ramón Jiménez is loyal to the *eternidad instantánea de la rosa*, "the instantaneous eternity of the rose." The universe itself is to Juan Ramón Jiménez *cuajada momentánea eternidad*, "coagulated momentary eternity." He lives in a constant derangement and rearrangement of the senses, in a process of permanent sin-esthesia; he describes tranquillity as violet, a flute as aromatic, and the hands of God as yellow. He is the Claude Debussy of our lyric poetry, and I do not know who could be compared, for sensibility and delicacy, to this *andaluz universal*.

Antonio Machado gives us the most exact image of Castile that has been presented since *Mío Cid* and Jorge Manrique. If one travels attentively through Castile and reads the verse of Antonio Machado, it will be almost impossible later to distinguish the two memories. However, he is not a descriptive poet, but an

introverted writer who gives us the soul of the Castilian peasant, austere and mystical. There is not the slightest trace of sensuality in his work. He is a poet of great intensity of expression, who constantly evokes the past. The Castilian plain here becomes personified, as in the *Poema del Cid* and the *Romancero Espanol*. From Antonio Machado, *silencioso y misterioso*, as Rubén Darío defined him, the foreign reader learns a lesson of austerity in which idea and word maintain a perfect equilibrium. He is a poet of dreams, seeking God through the mists. The prey of Christian love, like a Dostoievsky of our lyric poetry, he exclaims: *poned atencion / un corazón solitario / no es un corazón*—"pay attention / a solitary heart / is not a heart." Antonio Machado's essential and at the same time most universal quality is his living sorrowing nostalgia for a past which brushes him with the wings of the despairing raven of Poe. His poetry, though consisting of simple words and techniques, hides underneath the quiet surface of its lakes the whole mystery of our life.

As the body and soul of the real Castile were rendered by Antonio Machado, so Miguel de Unamuno, in mystic ecstasy, gives us her metaphysical image—Castile raised up as an altar to God. The same Spanish exaltation that produced the atmosphere of Quixote informs the feverish, polemic, anguished and anguish-inducing thought of Unamuno. His independent Christianity is that of our mystics of the Golden Age who "die because they do not die,"⁵ but Unamuno is nonetheless a mystic of another temperament who borders on nihilism in the overflowing quality and religious fever of his impatient longing for eternity. The verse of Unamuno represents an obsessive self-interrogation as to man's destiny beyond death. There is not the slightest serenity in this fevered work. The poet is intensely preoccupied with words and their values; he constantly plays with words and ends by sucking them dry and exhausting them of meaning. This is the cause often of the nihilist desolation and vast, abysmal emptiness toward which the Unamunian anguish draws us—twin to Quvedo and

⁵ St. Theresa.

very close to Kierkegaard, whom Unamuno greatly admired.

In this man, hungry for eternity, the idea of time itself is dissolved as a consolation against death: *seré mi creador, mi criatura, seré lo que pasó?*—"am I my own creator, am I my own creature, or am I the past?" In the impassioned prayer of Unamuno, *The Christ of Velasquez*, may be heard the most profound voice of the Spaniard in a perpetual agony of crucifixion. From the Spanish point of view it is our most universal poetry—though not our most beautiful—because it is the most desperately and anguishedly religious.

* * *

After this generation of great ones, contemporary Spanish poetry can be divided, as I have said, into three further groups. Pedro Salinas, Jorge Guillén and León Felipe belong in one group; Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti are the outstanding poets of a second; and Miguel Hernández was the most brilliant of the third and youngest. The most European and abstract aspect of our poetry—in the manner of Valéry, so to speak—is to be found in Salinas and Guillén. García Lorca and Alberti are the most typically Spanish, with the abundant wit and grace of the Andalusian; like de Falla in his music, they consciously stylized the popular element.

Because of its sensual quality, the *Romancero Gitano* of García Lorca is and will always be more widely known than the poetically greater *Poeta en Nueva York*. The *Romancero Gitano* exemplifies a modernization of the romance or ballad—that typical creation of the Spanish spirit. The ballad is a dramatic and living form which conceives of and fragments life into individual episodic parts, a form which is singularly adapted to the Spanish character. Despite their intellectualism and vanguardism, I have more than once heard the ballads of García Lorca recited by ordinary soldiers in the trenches. As for the *Poeta en Nueva York*, recently brought out in Mexico by the poet's friend, José Bergamín, this book is one of the chief works of poetry in the contem-

porary world. In my opinion it represents the greatest possible application of surrealism in poetry by a Spaniard who experiences New York. But it is surrealism in the Spanish manner. In Spain surrealism was as much a skin-deep phenomenon as *modernismo*. It spread rapidly but did not create a school. As a consistent poetic approach it persisted only in the first work of Vicente Aleixandre, and in Juan Larrea, the friend of the Peruvian César Vallejo. These last two also introduced *creacionismo*⁶ to Spain.

The techniques of the vanguard never made Spanish poetry inhuman, except for the ephemeral attempts of the affected Gerardo Diego, the literary pope of the Falange. From such techniques of expression we took what is most important—liberty. This applies even to the subterranean verse of the Lorca of *Poeta en Nueva York* or of the Alberti of *Sobre los ángeles*. The human sincerity of their work is such that what there is of Surrealist techniques and Freudian influences appears submerged by their passion, and this is the source of their universal value. García Lorca, Alberti and the other poets of his and the following generation all gave up surrealism very quickly in favor of other, peculiarly Spanish, forms of expression.

Poeta en Nueva York is a disquieting work written in 1929-30 when García Lorca was a student at Columbia University. An entire world, the mechanical, mechanized and soulless world of New York is dissolved through love. The book develops into a great poem of disintegration, integrated by love and human pity. It is concerned with the various other-worlds of Manhattan, as for example Harlem:

*Quiero llorar porque me da la gana
como lloran los niños del último banco
porque yo no soy un hombre, ni un poeta, ni una hoja,
pero sí un pulso herido que sonda las cosas del otro lado.*

⁶ A poetic movement of the post-World War I period, related to ultraism, dadaism, etc. Its chief characteristics are a bewildering variety of expression and great audacity of metaphor.

"I want to cry because I feel like it
As the children cry on the farthest bench,
Because I am not man nor poet nor leaf,
But a wounded pulse which sounds things from the other side."

The poem entitled *Oficina y denuncia* contains the exact definition and the most accusatory denunciation of the mastodon world of Manhattan, rendered in violent poetry. *Poeta en Nueva York* is the Guernica—long before Guernica—of Lorcan poetry.

Lorca's innate sense of drama inevitably drew him to the theatre. It was the logical outlet for his poetry, which from the beginning had been dramatic, as in the *Romancero Gitano*, *Canciones* and *Poema del cante jondo*. Moreover, Lorca needed the living and direct contact with the public (not the indirect one with the reader), needed to have his poetry rise on the hot wings of applause which he drank in off-stage and in the final curtain-call of the author.

The great fame of Federico García Lorca in death has somewhat obscured that of his living compatriot, Rafael Alberti. Nonetheless, Alberti is the most important contemporary Spanish poet—though Juan Ramón Jiménez has had the most influence, and Jorge Guillén⁷ writes the purest verse. In his exile in Buenos Aires (I believe his second is in Montevideo, in flight from Farrell as formerly from Franco) Alberti published a fateful and decisive book entitled *Entre el clavel y la espada* ("Between the Carnation and the Sword"), with quotations from the *Poema del Cid*, the most ancient epic of the Spanish people. As great a stylist of Spanish "folklore" as Lorca, but with more technique and finesse than the Granadan, though also colder, Alberti soon followed other paths and became deeply involved in Spanish political rivalries. His early surrealism did not ally him with political or anti-political anarchism, nor with the Trotskyism of André Breton and his group, but on the contrary with Commun-

⁷ More self-exacting in regard to formal expression than any other Spanish poet, Guillén is about to re-edit for the third or fourth time his one book, *Cántico* ("Canticle"). The passion of the new poems and their emotional force overcome to a certain degree the extreme purity of form, almost cubist, of his verse.

ism. During the Civil War he came to be the official poet of the Spanish Communist party. After having passed through all these fires, the poet of *Sobre los ángeles* ("Above the Angels") returned to his early traditional style, drawn, in these years of exile, to the two symbols of carnation and sword, connoting the lyrical and the epical styles.

In 1934 Alberti said: "Before, my poetry was at the service of myself and a few others. Today, no. I am impelled toward writing by the same thing that moves the laborers and the peasants—that is, by a revolutionary impulse. I sincerely believe that the new way lies here." The popular and folkloristic element of his early verse drew him into the path of revolutionary poetry of Communist thesis. Today I do not know exactly what he would say, but I know that he has returned to his early manner. He has sought renewal in a kind of erotic mysticism of the body and in the eternal as well as characteristically Surrealist theme of metamorphosis. He has returned for inspiration to the *Cid*—an epic which, when it is experienced at such a distance, works in the manner of a romantic sentiment. The epic tone is transformed into a profoundly lyrical one. (I think it is interesting to point out that exile and "underground" can thus play a large part in a return to nationalistic or romantic themes in poetry.)

Rafael Alberti is our great contemporary master in the tradition of Góngora and Quevedo, endowed with a brilliant technique rivalled only by Miguel Hernández. His poetry, in spite of being identified with a popular cause, is often cold by reason of its intellectualism and because of its excessive polish. That he is nonetheless not inhuman is evident from the following example from *Entre el clavel y la espada*, inspired by the bitterness of exile, which says:

*Duras las tierras ajenas:
Ellas agrandan los muertos,
Ellas.*

*Triste, es más triste llegar
Que lo que se deja.
Ellas agrandan el llanto,
Ellas.*

*Cuando duele el corazón,
Cantan ellas.
Creceen hostiles los trigos
Para el que llega.*

*Si dice: Mira aquel árbol;
Como aquel . . . todos recelan.*

*El mar. El mar. Cuántas olas
Que no regresan.*

"Harsh are foreign lands:
They magnify the dead,
They.

Sad, it is more sad to arrive
Than what one leaves behind.
They enlarge the plaints,
They.

When the heart sorrows
They sing.
Grows hostile the grain
To him who arrives.

One says: Look at that tree;
Like that . . . Everybody draws back.

The sea. The sea. So many waves
That do not return."

It is interesting to compare this last book of Alberti's with the *Crève-Coeur* of his comrade both of vocation and party, Louis Aragon. Since the death of Lorca, his fellow Andalusian, Alberti has borne a grave responsibility as head of the dispersed group of young Spanish poets in exile—a poetic responsibility, naturally.

A few writers of universal interest are still to be mentioned among this younger group. Vicente Aleixandre remained in Spain and writes a poetry of life-in-death and death-in-life reminiscent, in its concern with biological change, of Hans Castorp's soliloquies in the *Magic Mountain*. Death is seen during a waltz, in *La destrucción o el amor* (1934), at the moment of the declaration of love:

... el momento de decir la palabra que estalla;
El momento en que los vestidos se convertirán en aves,
Las ventanas en grillos,
Y ese beso que estaba (en el rincón) entre dos bocas
Se convertirá en una espina
Que dispensará la muerte diciendo: Yo os amo.

"... the moment of saying the word that explodes;
The moment in which clothes will be converted into birds,
The windows into crickets,
The lights into 'Help!'
And this kiss which was (in the corner) between two mouths
Will be converted into a thorn
Which will dispense death, saying: I love you."

And he also says, longingly confounding death with love:

*Ven, ven muerte, amor: ven pronto, te destruyo;
Ven que quiero matar o amar, o morir o darte todo.*

"Come, come death, love: come quickly, I destroy you;
Come, for I wish to kill or to love, to die or to give you everything."

Last year Aleixandre published a book, *Sombra del paraíso* ("Shadow of Paradise"), which the distinguished critic Dámaso Alonso praised highly. He placed it on a par with *Sobre los ángeles* and *Residencia en la tierra* but, for political reasons, did not dare to mention the authors' names (Alberti and Neruda, respectively).

Emilio Prados, Manuel Altolaguirre and Luis Cernuda are all three Andalusians. The first two have settled in Mexico after the wanderings of exile, and the third lives in England. Emilio Prados, Augustinian, metaphysical and introverted poet of Málaga, uses popular forms of *coplas* and ballads in his short poems, reminiscent of the Andalusian *cante jondo*. The themes of love confounded with death, memory confounded with oblivion,⁸ and above all the theme of the anguished and not-to-be-shared solitude of man are paramount in his work. Prados calls death his sister:

⁸ *Memoria del olvido*—chapter title in St. Augustine's *Confessions*—is the title of his latest work.

*Aunque me cueste el árbol de mi cuerpo,
Conduceme a ti, muerte, negra hermana.*

"Even if it costs me the tree of my body
Conduct me to you, death, black sister."

because like St. Teresa he knows that "to die is to awaken" and like her has lost hope of hoping, and chides the Veiled One:

*llámame que ya te espero
y ya no puedo esperar.*

"Call me, for I await you
And yet I cannot wait."

Luis Cernuda, of Seville, is perhaps the most Byronic of our young poets. At first sight his verses give the impression of being translations of lines written in the past by the disdainful adolescent poets of England. The author of *La realidad y el deseo* ("Reality and Desire"), is the translator of Keats and Hölderlin. An expatriate living in England, Cernuda writes fascinating and disquieting poetry. Seeking to escape sleeplessness and desire in the arms of oblivion, he says:

*Donde al fin quede libre sin saberlo yo mismo
disuelto en niebla ausencia,
ausencia leve como carne de niño.
Allá, allá lejos,
donde habite el olvido.*

"Where at the last I remain free without knowing it myself
Dissolved in the mist of absence,
Absence light as the flesh of a child.
There, there, far away
Where lives oblivion."

Manuel Altolaguirre, like Prados from Málaga, the most angelic as well as demonic of our young poets, is perhaps closest to the best English romantics. The translator of Shelley's *Adonais*, Altolaguirre makes love the unique theme of his poetry, yet it is always in a minor key. He humanizes everything he touches, smells or sees—the garden becomes a feverish body; death is a mother.

*ven muerte que soy un niño
y quiero que me desnuden,
que se fué la luz y tengo
cansancio de estos vestidos.*

"Come, death, for I am a child
And I'd like to be undressed,
For the light is gone and I feel
Tired of these clothes."

Night is like a woman who wears the moon on her heart and dawn on her forehead; earth becomes a heart, and the stars, the lungs of night; he sees time as a plain and memory as a horse upon it, the rider of which is man.

And finally there is Miguel Hernández, whose early work is preserved in all the anthologies; were he alive today, he would be an even more astonishing example of creative exuberance than García Lorca himself. Hernández seemed the most vigorous offshoot, transplanted to the present age, of the Garcilasian tenderness,⁹ of the full brilliance of Gongorism, and of the deceptive simplicity of Calderon's verse forms. In a word, a great seventeenth century artist in modern times. The violence of expression and revolutionary passion of Hernández, combined with these archaizing and mimetic faculties, gave to his poetry a peculiar enchantment. He wished to be *el labrador de más aire*, "the most dashing farmer"—the title of one of his allegorical plays; that is, the poet closest to the direct sensations of earth and garden. The Spanish falangists made him a common convict, and he died miserably of tuberculosis in the jail at Alicante. This crime, though less well known than the fate of Lorca, appears nonetheless even more cruel, because it cut off in his thirtieth year the liveliest and greenest offshoot and the greatest promise of Spanish poetry. The following two stanzas, the first and last of his poem *Sino sangriento* ("Bloody Fate"), demonstrate all the virtues and faults of this unique poet:

*De sangre en sangre vengo
como el mar de ola en ola,*

⁹ Garcilaso de la Vega, the originator of the Spanish poetic Renaissance of the 16th century.

*de color de amapola el alma tengo.
De amapola sin suerte es mi destino,
y llevo de amapola en amapola
a dar en la cornada de mi sino.*

.

*Me dejaré arrastrar hecho pedazos,
ya que así se lo ordenan a mi vida
la sangre y su marea,
los cuerpos y mi estrella ensangrentada.
Seré una sola y dilatada herida
hasta que dilatadamente sea
un cadáver de espuma: viento y nada.*

"From blood to blood I come
As the sea from wave to wave,
My soul is the color of poppies.
Luckless as a poppy is my fate,
From poppy to poppy
I give my fate a cornada.

.

I shall let myself be dragged away in pieces,
And it is thus that my life is fated
By my blood and its tides,
By the bodies and my bloody star.
I will be nothing but a gaping wound
Until, finally dilated, I shall be
A cadaver of spume: wind and nothingness.

* * *

In the body of this essay I have cited the names of some dozen poets. All tend to delineate that irreducible Spaniard who appears impervious to change, immutably fixed, like the perennial stork atop our Castilian castles. In each poet there is an individualistic emphasis and vitality that gives life even to death itself, and it is this which makes our poets so typically Spanish. In some cases, especially in that of Miguel de Unamuno, due to the power and fascination which the language exercises over the poet, Spanish poetry is inseparable from the Castilian tongue, and its beauty is difficult to translate into another idiom. This is true of poetry in all languages, but in the Spanish the form and idea are consubstantial to an unusual degree because of the presence in the people of a living tradition of classic-popular verse. The popular and

the classic are closely interwoven in Spain. Literary Castilian in all its poetic grace and the most sophisticated adornments of our idiom exist in the language of the Castilian people of today, and I mean of the poorest peasants. In Spain there are not two separate languages, one cultivated and the other popular. The people use every day in their homes the language of the poets.

I believe that Spanish poetry is in the vanguard of contemporary writing because before all else it expresses that profoundly human emotion, that common fate of our time: anguish. Luis Cernuda wrote:

*"Como la arena tierra,
Como la arena misma,
La caricia es mentira, el amor es mentira, la amistad es mentira.*

*Tú sola—tierra—quedas con el deseo,
Con este deseo que aparecía ser mío y ni siquiera el mío
sino el deseo de todos,
malvados, inocentes,
enamorados o canallas.*

*Tierra, tierra y deseo:
Una forma perdida.*

*"Like the sandy earth
Like the sand itself
The caress is a lie, love is a lie, friendship is a lie.*

*You alone—earth—remain with desire
Remain with this desire which pretends to be mine and not
even mine
But the desire of everybody
Of the cursed, of the innocent
Of the lovers, of the scoundrels.*

*Earth, earth and desire:
A lost form."*

During the Civil War, when I was scarcely twenty-five, I too wrote in this mood *Cercada soledad* ("Imprisoned Solitude"). I felt terribly alone in the midst of the flood of illusion and of the sea of my people's collective despair:

*No les salva a los hombres ni en su inmediato sino
ese dolor común que organiza a las gentes*

*hacia una estrella izada por numerosos brazos
O una felicidad que no distingue labios*

.

*Si los ríos se buscan para sumar sus cáuces,
agrándanse las nubes hasta negar sus bordes
y los campos prescinden de sus antiguas lindes,
imposible es que el hombre su soledad comparta.*

"Man is not saved, not even in his immediate fate
By this common suffering which organizes the people
Toward a star hoisted by numerous arms
Nor by a happiness which does not distinguish lips

When the rivers seek each other in order to unite their waters
The clouds grow larger until they deny their limits
And the fields dispense with their former boundaries
Then it is impossible for man to share his solitude."

Another feature of our poetry is our obsession with death, our living surrounded by death, our hunger for eternity as a meta-physical value. In this sense our most universal poetry, inasmuch as it is our most religious, is that of our Quixotic Don Miguel de Unamuno. In the last analysis it is the qualities of emotion and anguish which give universality to poetry. When a Spaniard writes true poetry, he puts man in the central position, nailed like a St. Andrew to the cross of life-in-death and death-in-life.

(TRANSLATED BY XIMENA DE ANGULO)

The Ring

by *Carlos Montenegro*



I NO LONGER seem to recall the reason for it. It was just one of the many little situations in which I became involved, some of which managed to land me in prison. The fact remains, however, that one day, along about evening, they threw me into cell number three (the last one in a certain infamous bloc) called by some "The Virgin's Boudoir" and by others "The Shooting Gallery." Even though I did not share the horror of this particular cell which was held by most prisoners, I would nevertheless have preferred either of the other two.

There was an air of mystery about the place, intensified by its strange design. It was roughly twelve feet long and perhaps but three in width—it was also very high and very white. A wall just outside hid everything from view. You couldn't see even the tiniest patch of sky. The noises from the court sounded distant and jumbled. There was carved into the wall at the far end an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, crudely done and tragic, her breast riddled with bullet holes, reminding one of the story of a certain hobo named Miramontes.

But who cared! I was only eighteen at the time. A roll of bills and a packet of *marihuana*—easily as effective as opium—in my pocket, plus all my carving tools besides. I had enough to do to keep me busy anyway: Santa Tapatía, the mayor's sweetheart, had commissioned me to carve a ring for her. It was an interesting if gruesome assignment.

All I needed to begin working was a human shin bone, and "Coyote," who was working with a chain gang in the cemetery, had promised to pick one up for me.

I must admit that I had tried to argue La Tapatía out of her weird desire. After all, I would have kept just as busy carving a ring from a peachstone, a cow's horn, or any one of a number of other more pleasant materials. But my arguments had been of no avail. "If you can't carve it from a human bone, then I don't want it, do you understand?"

Well, that was that. Yet somehow or another I've always had a lot of respect for other people's bones, especially when I didn't know who they belonged to. One of the reasons for this might easily have been an unconscious fear that some day I might mer- rily start carving away at one of the bones of my brother Luis, who had been murdered in Huazteca. Yet in my brother's case, I probably didn't have as much to worry about as in some others. They had shot my brother only six months ago. Whereas in the case of that revolutionist whom they caught and hanged it was another matter. He had been dead a long enough time for his bones to be nice and clean. For instance, why was I so frightened when I noticed the skull on the judge's desk when my case was being tried? Why had it seemed to look at me with such empty misery? Why had it fallen off the desk as one of the orderlies carelessly dusted it and after a few tragic bounces come to rest exactly at my feet? The more I thought about this now the more frightened I became. Pretty soon I was muttering prayers at the feet of the Virgin on the wall. How beautifully had Miramontes carved her!

Everybody said that Miramontes, the vagabond, had committed a great wrong. Everybody agreed that the poor priest had not deserved such treatment. In fact, when the unfortunate Padre had heard about Miramontes being in the death house he had come to console him, to prepare him for death and a good life afterwards. As he walked slowly down the prison corridors he blessed everybody on the way. Some of the prisoners kissed his hands, his cloak. The Indian "Coyote," quite under the influence of *marihuana*, even sobbed, kneeling at his feet: "Padre! Ah, Pa-dre!" The priest had been very touched. He could not know that "the weed" always made "Coyote" repentant and mournful.

The priest patted "Coyote's" head like a father. He seemed so small, so quiet and kind then. Who would have thought that such a little old man could scream so loudly?

You could tell that the Padre was a bit nervous when he reached Miramontes' cell. And no wonder—the condemned man had such an awful reputation. But gradually—the hobo was weeping so hard—he began to trust him a little more and even to feel sorry for him. As he consoled him, Miramontes hid his head in the curate's lap and raised his hands imploringly:

"Father, save me, save me!" he wept. "I am innocent."

"Place your faith in God, my son. Look to him for hope . . ."

And the priest began to talk very softly, apparently uttering words of sweetness, for the hobo lifted his head and watched the Padre intently, as if he were suddenly surprised at such talk and at seeing the man there, so close to him.

The hobo's eyes were red with weeping—great big eyes they were, a little entranced just then, turning slowly to glance at the door, which was barred and locked.

"Father," Miramontes repeated, "save me. Can't you save me?"

"Alas, my son!" whispered the priest. "It is time to think about the life to come. You cannot know what happiness awaits you, if only you repent . . ."

Then he began again, doubtlessly to tell the vagabond the same sweet story, for Miramontes began to caress his thighs, his chest, and, slowly, his throat. He began to caress the priest with his two dark hands, his two enormous thumbs.

"Do you, too, Father, believe that I strangled my wife? But she was pregnant! Surely no one has the right to strangle his wife when she is pregnant—even if the child does belong to someone else! I am innocent! Father, I am innocent!"

And he continued caressing the priest's neck.

The priest talked on in a subdued voice, for those hands caressing him all over did make him a bit nervous again. The hobo's fright-glazed eyes were gradually getting more animated. His hands came to rest in a gesture of almost sensual pleasure on the

priest's shoulders, while the thumbs went on caressing the Padre's rather prominent Adam's-apple somewhat roughly.

Then, suddenly, Miramontes, lowering his head once more into the priest's robe, and without looking up, grabbed the old man's neck brutally, twisting his head back and forth on his shoulders with violence. This was accompanied by the most frightful howl of pain and terror, which chilled the other prisoners long after it had ceased. As the officials started running toward the hobo's cell, Miramontes dragged the dead priest to the door and tried to push him out through the bars. The space between the bars was too small, however, only permitting the head to go through, and once through not permitting it to be withdrawn. The guards had to saw the bars to release the poor priest's body.

It was that night when Miramontes, probably in a fury of repentance, chiseled an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe into the wall of his cell and knelt at her feet praying until the soldiers came next morning and put their rifles through the bars and shot him on the spot.

Some of the shots were aimed too high and speckled the breast of the Virgin of Guadalupe. I was musing on this and idly rolling myself a *marihuana* cigarette when "Coyote" finally came with the bone.

I noticed him making the sign of the cross as he approached my cell and again when he left. It gave me a strange feeling to be alone 'after that.

I looked at the shin-bone which he had left on top of a big empty packing case which was the only piece of furniture in my cell. The bone was not completely white; fatty spots streaked it here and there. I shivered when I suddenly remembered the skull on the Judge's table. Night had come on and the cell was now lighted with a lantern, so that my shadow cast a silhouette against the wall on the corridor just outside.

Far off I could hear the Municipal Band playing in the square in front of the jail. More faintly still, but more noticeable to me, the notes of a piano came through indistinctly. I remembered my childhood and the times when visitors used to gather in our par-

lor—which always delighted us since on those occasions we did not have to go to bed at seven; then, before I knew it, I realized that I was letting my thoughts run back over my whole life. As I worked on my carving, I noticed that it was acquiring more and more a corpse-like odor until it seemed to take on the form which had become a symbol of my existence. I gouged out that part.

In the distance, the piano which had brought back all these memories went on playing. And while I breathed in deeply the fumes of the *marihuana* to free myself from the mournful memories, I began to saw on the shin-bone with a piece of tin, cut so it had the proper teeth.

My shadow, exaggerated in size, seemed to move in rhythm with the distant piano tunes. Finally, they ceased.

In the absolute, deep silence which followed, my primitive saw made a deafening noise. As the drug began to work, I felt more and more artistic; I could carve best of all at this stage, without using my brain at all—or, perhaps, using some unknown section of it. My faculties were at their keenest. The shin-bone was hard, though. When I had finished sawing and picked up the cutting tool, I felt a shiver run through me.

Nobody had passed between me and the corridor wall, and yet I was certain a shadow had flitted rapidly past against it. I looked back into the cell; there was nobody there. Only the Virgin, roughly outlined and tragic in form, seemed to offer me her shot-riddled breast. While I commended my soul to her keeping and at the same time continued my work on the ring, the shadow passed by again. My prayers froze on my lips.

I was sitting beside the door and for some time, I suddenly realized, I had felt that someone was standing near me. I turned my head quickly. There was the hobo, Miramontes, just as always, with his great, powerful hands, standing there motionless.

How could that be? Hadn't they shot him? Was this a mirage caused by the drug? It seemed now that what had happened was that I'd dreamed that they'd shot him and my friend the Yucateco had told me about it. Or rather, I must have told him the dream when we both had one of our *marihuana* jags on. The hobo was

alive, and standing there beside me with his hands on his hips, his enormous thumbs dangling from them—those thumbs which had cost his wife, and then the priest, their lives.

He wasn't looking at me. Probably I had imagined that other story; it was today at dawn that they were going to kill him and meantime here he was, depressed because he was thinking of how soon he had to die. I wanted to console him.

"Listen, Hobo, old boy," I said, "You might as well resign yourself. After all, the old lady only kisses us once."

Without knowing what I was doing, I found myself kneeling below the Guadelupana.

In my fingers I felt such an intense pain that it seemed the bones had been severed at a single blow.

When I thought of my fingers, that made me remember the hobo's thumbs, and I got frightened and began to pray fervently, looking up at the image. When I saw her mournful, sweet face I suddenly got an inspiration to carve that on the ring.

Overcoming my fear, or pretending to, like children who start singing in the dark, I began to pay attention to the details, as far as the *marihuana* would let me do anything with care while under its influence. Bit by bit, forgetting everything else, I observed the Virgin's face as if I were going to carve from memory.

I began slowly, very slowly, to memorize the details, just as I would carve them. When I reached the Virgin's face I felt excited, as it called to mind the neck of the priest who had been strangled and how it had stretched out like a piece of worn-out elastic.

A whisper by my side showed that my companion was praying.

Slowly, like the pace of a clock's minute hand, I continued my scrutiny of the image. My fingers were hurting a lot and somewhere in the distance my mind seemed to tell me that I was cutting hard with the tool. The Virgin was showing me the shot-holes in her breasts, and how well the strangler had depicted the pleats in her robe. Then I reached her hands. When I came to look more closely at the thumbs, I felt the same shiver as before. They looked as though they belonged to the hobo, rather than to a Virgin.

My lips burned with rage. Suddenly I felt my throat in an iron grasp. I couldn't struggle; the hobo's enormous thumbs were suffocating me with a long, slow pressure. Though I knew I was dying, I only succeeded in hearing the shots from a thirty-thirty striking on the floor outside. Was that the soldiers shooting Miramontes?

I awoke the next morning feeling the miserable after-effects of the drug. But I *had* finished the ring.

The ring which I carved in fear that night became famous among the friends of Santa Tapatía. Their only criticism was that the Virgin's neck was a bit long and her thumbs out of proportion with the rest of her perfect hands.

TRANSLATED BY HELEN B. MACMILLAN

The Converse Tree

by Robert Stallman



A scattering of leaves uncrinkling, greening,
Whirligigs twigward until twig-caught,
While chestnut boughs, releasing blossom-wrought,
Taptalk their paradox on sun-flecked screening.
The sun, begun at dusk, is noon, is leaning
Backward to dawn as shadows shorten taut,
Backward to spring when first our bodies thought,
Thought without summer's lust or autumn's meaning.

Time Now is nought, for now Time's contrariwise:
Spring, autumnal with summer's wantonness,
Is mirrored in our windows and our eyes.

But now Nature's declension in regress,
Reversed, is winter in our last caress:
Leaves recrinkling fall, as we two rise.

German Romanticism

by *Denis de Rougemont*



I

DREAM AND "MYSTIQUE"

A DISCERNING CONSCIOUSNESS is the first spiritual conquest of men anguished by the mystery of a hostile, restless Nature. The word of reason which distinguishes between things, establishes and identifies them, appears as a deliverance, a victory over chaos and its terrors. But when this victory is too complete, it leaves man with a feeling of disappointment and inexpressible impoverishment. The rational world is reassuring, but in it many questions remain unanswered, ancestral hungers lack nourishment. Out of this state of affairs, little by little, another anguish is born, an attraction comparable to that of giddiness, towards those regions of the nocturnal being which common sense and philosophy seek to ban from humanity. And whereas primitive man, in his panic, turned towards liberation through reason, sceptical man, at the close of epochs that were poor in mystery, took passionate refuge in the "nocturnal aspects" of his nature. Thus German Romanticism was born after the century of the Enlightenment. And thus it is that our elementary mystical thirsts have appeared once more after a century of positivist science.

Is it true that night and the dream have nothing to reveal that concerns the day? Is it true that passion, anguish and madness are less real than our tyrannical discretions? *Songe est mensonge* was decreed by reason. But reason does not assuage our hunger.

The dream, on the contrary, offers us paradisaical visions and terrors of alluring intensity. Could this be the sign or means of access to a higher truth?

It was this question that was posed by the first German Romantics. "They all agree," writes Albert Béguin,¹ "that the nocturnal life is in constant communication with another reality that is vaster, anterior to and elevated above the individual life." But what is this reality? Is it our own deeper nature, or is it the Divinity itself? One of the theorists of Romanticism, Ignaz Troxler, declared that "the more we withdraw into ourselves, turning aside from appearances, the more we succeed in penetrating into the nature of things that are outside ourselves." But here again, is it really a question of things that are outside ourselves, or isn't it simply things which although within ourselves, had remained unknown to our consciousness? Tieck put the question very clearly: "We should have to know to what extent our dreams belong to us." When we dream, "is it we who make game of ourselves or is it a hand from above that shuffles the cards?" E. T. A. Hoffman had already hinted the answer: "And suppose a spiritual principle, foreign to ourselves, were the driving power of these sudden irruptions of unknown images which project themselves across the path of our ideas in so abrupt and striking a manner?" From there to believing that the dream is a "vestige of the divine" there remains only the nicety of an orthodox scruple, of one last fear that man might be confused with God. Not without skill, Troxler avoids both the difficulty and the choice, and for him the dream is "now an echo of the supraterrrestrial in the terrestrial, now a reflection of the terrestrial in the supraterrrestrial"; or "That which dreams in us is Spirit at the moment when it descends into Matter," but it is also "Matter at the moment when it elevates itself to the Spirit."

Here we have the profound ambiguity in which Romanticism was born and which it still lives on. To believe that the dream

¹ In an excellent work entitled *L'Âme romantique et le rêve* (The Romantic Soul and the Dream), from which I have taken the greater part of the texts quoted in this chapter.

reveals only *our own* secrets, would mean acceptance of the Freudian thesis. To believe that it *also* reveals a higher world, is to enter upon the mystic path. If most of the Romantics have not made a clear choice—and this ruse is a vital one for the poet—everything leads us to believe that they are closer to the mystics than to the psychoanalysts. When they ask if the dream is knowledge or illusion, and whether it is “the Other” or the nocturnal “I” which we encounter in the depths of the unconscious, they are formulating a crucial problem posed by all mystics. It is also the crucial problem of any attempt at defining the human person. For we are constantly tempted to assimilate the *deeper* “I” and its secret impulsions with the Word which comes from *elsewhere*, and which is the only really divine vocation. A philosopher of the human person will therefore attach the greatest importance to a precise defining of the parallel between *mystique* and Romanticism.

To begin with, we find the same attention paid to *signs*, intuitions and chance encounters which, although apparently fortuitous, are immediately interpreted as messages by the predisposed soul. All this presupposes a state of passion, a certain temperature, in which everything become translucent. It may also presuppose a nostalgia that has known long disappointment and that seizes with avidity upon the most furtive promises of happiness, liberation and adventure. All Romantic as well as Surrealist poetry is lying in wait for the “surprises filled with meaning” about which the mystics also speak.

Another rather striking analogy is the role of *rhetoric* among both the poets of the dream and the mystics. The philosopher G. von Schubert, as also later, the poet Jean Paul, insisted on a fact to which Freud would be the first to give prominence, which was that the mind in a state of dream expresses itself ordinarily in a metaphorical, regular type of language, as though it were bound, in this domain, by laws that are more precise and more invariable than those that govern the waking state. On the other hand, it is well known that Hindu, Mohammedan and Christian mystics have at all times reinvented the same figures of speech

to express the inexpressible experiences through which they were passing.²

And this leads us to the heart of the problem, the *expression of the inexpressible*. Here we are obliged to go beyond the circumscribed domain of the dream. The Romantics, moreover, went well beyond it in their exploration of the Unconscious. The dream for them was nothing else than the "door" opening on to the ineffable world, which is properly the domain of the Mystics.

All mystic or romantic experience presupposes the existence of a *center* or divine *subsoil* of the soul (this is the *Urgrund* of Jakob Boehme), about which nothing can be said, but which, nevertheless, is the source of all we say. This is the Ineffable, the Inexpressible, the kingdom of absolute Silence. And yet—and herein lies its paradox—we see perfectly well that the great Mystics, and after them the great Romantics, spend their time talking about it, writing about it, trying to surround it with figures of speech which, being always insufficient, have to be inexhaustibly multiplied. Let us admit without the slightest irreverence that there is no one more verbose than a mystic, unless it be a German Romantic. For the reason that both of them are fired with ambition to communicate in writing that which they continue to define as the Inexpressible. From then on, the complaint will be the same, whether we speak of Theresa of Avila or simply of Ludwig Tieck. Give me "new words" with which to express the inexpressible, said the saint. And the poet: "But where could I *find the words* with which to depict, even haltingly, the marvels of the vision I now witnessed and which, transforming my soul, transported me into the presence of an invisible, divine reality of *ineffable* splendor. An *inexpressible* enchantment elevated my entire being . . ."

Here perhaps we touch upon the mystery itself, the inexhaustible source, the original, fascinating point from which all lan-

² The Freudian evil seems to me to be that they individualize the meaning of these symbols and deduct from them a purely sexual clue to the dream. C. G. Jung is undoubtedly nearer to reality when he sees in the images of our dreams the fundamental religious symbols of the most remote epochs and the most diverse peoples.

guage, all literary expression springs. "Where shall I find the words?" they sigh. And their complaint is both sincere and tragic. But how many words will it make them accumulate in order to say that nothing can be said. . . .

And yet both Romantics and mystics are persuaded that, however powerless they may be to translate the unconscious or the inexpressible into words, they have heard *something*. "I think I have made an important discovery," wrote Ritter, "which is the passive consciousness of the Involuntary." And on this basis, the second generation of Romanticism was to formulate its famous theory of Inspiration—which has become such a commonplace today that we forget its mystical origin. "The poet and the dreamer are *passive*, they listen to the language of a voice which is inside them and nevertheless foreign to them, which rises in the depths of their own beings without their being able to do other than hail it as the echo of a divine oration."³

It becomes impossible to doubt any longer; the purely formal analogy we have described thus far becomes a profound identity. The intervention of the category "passivity" makes us understand the nature of the Silence and the Inexpressible mentioned by both Mystics and Romantics: it is the negation and death of the world of forms and human language, the negation and death of that which is divine, of the "I" that is distinct and active. This is the spiritual Night described by St. John of the Cross, of which the night of dreams, acclaimed by the poets, was but the symbol and physical sign.⁴ It is the "kingdom of Being, which is confounded with the kingdom of Nothingness, eternity conquered at last, the plenitude of which cannot be humanly expressed otherwise than by the image of the Absence of all creatures, and all form." For we can only perceive and express that which is diverse and distinct, that which has taken form, which our consciousness has *separated* from the Whole. And it is this that constitutes our every-day reality. In order to return to the

³ Albert Béguin, *op. cit.*

⁴ For the Romantics, "sleep is a prefiguration of death," and it is only in death that we can be reunited with the Other, the inexpressible.

Whole and to the original Unity, we must therefore relinquish the diverse, relinquish the real, relinquish ourselves, and merge with the Inexpressible thing which, in the eyes of the flesh, remains pure Nothingness.

Thus the end of the romantic quest through the images of the dream becomes identified with that of all mystic experience: it is "the pure ineffable presence," "contemplation without object." It is therefore legitimate to agree with Albert Béguin in the following conclusion: "The importance of Romanticism will always be to have recognized and affirmed the profound resemblance between poetic states and revelations of a religious nature; to have given credence to the irrational powers and to have dedicated body and soul to the immense nostalgia of the being in exile."

II

THE BEING IN EXILE

From whence springs this feeling of exile which we find at the origin of the most varied mystic experiences, from what recollection of a happy fatherland long lost? It would be easy to reply by citing the duality of our nature, both corporal and spiritual. But starting from a general statement of this type, how could we arrive at the elucidation of that strangeness of all facts in the life of the human spirit, the embarkment along the *via mystica*?

If we may be permitted—as is a little too easily the case today—to evolve from the study of disease a new view concerning the structure of man, we might perhaps seek in the biographies of the Romantics some light on the Mystics, properly speaking, or at least on the human causes of the feeling of exile in which their passion is awakened. Let us take the example of Karl Philip Moritz, who presents above all the advantage of a strangely disinterested auto-elucidation.

Born in an environment that was both quietist and pietist, in the midst of the rationalist eighteenth century, Moritz was one of the very first to turn his attention to the study of dreams. He

was predisposed towards it as a result of the habit of probing self-examination that was being practiced all around him by the disciples of Madame Guyon.⁵

Not content to publish a review entirely devoted to the analysis of dreams, Moritz wrote two autobiographical novels which permit us to penetrate into the intimacy of the pre-mystic experience. (Or should we say of the mystic experience deprived of grace and reduced to its purely human aspects?)

The point of departure would appear to be a *wound* which he received from life itself, a shock which left him agape before the irremediable contradiction between stern reality and the profound desires of the "I." This wound was so cruel and so intimate that his conscious being avoided the memory of it or, as Freud would say, repressed it, in such a way that the secret cause of his suffering eventually became merged with the fact of living in general. Hence the idea that he was obliged to *expiate the wrong which he had committed just by his very existence*. A mystic philosopher such as Ignaz Troxler did not hesitate to extend this process to include the entire universe overtaken by original sin. "From whatever angle we choose to examine it, man bears within him a wound which lacerates everything within him and which life itself may have given him." Not without lucidity, Moritz succeeded in depicting the state of consciousness which is born of this obscure laceration. "It was as though the weight of his existence had overwhelmed him. That, day after day, he should be obliged to wake up with himself, go to sleep with himself, drag about with him at every step his detested "I" . . . that from now on he would inexorably have to be himself . . . little by little this idea plunged him into a despair that brought him to the bank of the river . . ."

But let us beware. This *detested* "I" is the fatality of the individual, carnal being, created, and bound to all creation. It is because of and through the "I" that consciousness can perceive ex-

⁵ It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of the role of quietism in the formation of modern psychology, and particularly of the psychology of the unconscious.

terior reality, and, therefore, like itself, this reality will appear to be wounded and painful. To detest oneself is equivalent to detesting the world. The incapacity to accept the world of reality is the sign of an incapacity to accept oneself—just because of this wound which should be forgotten *if we do not succeed in expiating it*. And in fact, abetted by this oblivion, by this refusal, the “I” little by little loses elements of its reality, which explains the feeling that is so frequent with most Romantics that they are not entirely assured of their own identity and must therefore look for it in the past. Moritz gives the following description of the hero of one of his novels: “It seemed to him that he had entirely escaped from himself and that before undertaking anything else, he would have to seek to find himself again in his memories. He felt that the only firm support of existence was to be found in the uninterrupted chain of recollections.”⁶ But, as Albert Béguin points out, Moritz at this point “leaves off, being once more incapable of seizing the redeeming thought.” The reason being that there is one recollection which is too painful to be re-lived. The ailing “I” doesn’t succeed in recapturing itself through memory, since the cause of its malady is precisely that which it cannot recall to mind, namely, the wound which is at the origin of the split consciousness.

How, then, may one leave the circle, how may one be healed? How may total life in its blessed unity be recovered? This is no longer possible here below, imprisoned in the guilty, sorrowful “I.” We must therefore seek it in the life beyond. And we have seen that the dream, or the descent into the depths of the unconscious, represents for the Romantics paths that lead back to a lost world, to the “real life” which is “elsewhere,” as Rimbaud expressed it. It is a life of indefinite expansion in the universe, or in divinity. It is a life of recovered innocence, for the “I” which becomes lost in it, loses as well the feeling of its guilt.

But in yet another manner, and one that is more precise, the dream and the *via mystica* are means of retrieving the lost world.

⁶ This is the *recherche du temps perdu* of Proust.

What must be underlined here is that this tendency to pantheistic or mystic dilatation of the being nearly always assumes the form of a *longing for death*. For the romantic poet, sleep foreshadows death and one's own progressive death is the ambition of all real mystics. But why should one want to die? Here the biographies of most of the Romantics provide the same reply. To be sure, the wound from which they are suffering is nearly always symbolized by the loss of some loved one. To pass over into the other world would mean to recover the dead: "The typical experience is that of Jean Paul on the death of his friends, of Novalis before the loss of Sophie von Kuhn, of Guérin meditating on the death of Marie, or Nerval pursuing the image of Aurelia; Anton Reiser (Moritz's hero) does the same thing already in childhood, when he questions himself as to what has become of his little sister. *The vow to find the dead again, to communicate with another universe* makes him scorn this life, and conscious of its limitations, he places his entire hope in an existence beyond the tomb."⁷

Through the dream or the *via mystica*, this beyond-the-tomb existence will be experienced in an inexpressible manner even before leaving this world. And it might perhaps be said that the general mystic experience can only be considered really Christian when the loved one with whose death the meditation is concerned is the person of Christ crucified—or becomes indiscernably merged with Christ's person. The Romantics did not go this far in the matter of sublimations—except perhaps Jean Paul and Novalis. They did not succeed in finding in the beyond a forgiving, healing presence, one which would also give them strength to accept the fact of their guilty "I" and the world of reality. The "contemplation without object" to which they attain at rare moments is therefore nothing other than the means of procuring enjoyment of the "voluptuous sensation" (as Moritz expresses it) of one's own dissolution; a circuitous means of re-experiencing one's wound, or rather the impulse which was destroyed by the

⁷ Albert Béguin, *op. cit.*

wound, but without admitting it and without being able to recognize it or express it. . . . This is the fundamental movement of all passion, the movement of a love that prefers nothingness to the limitations of life—the joy in the face of death of Tristan and Isolde.

III

MYSTICISM AND THE HUMAN PERSON

The example of the German Romantics illustrates a deep, unvarying relationship in man, the relationship existing between recourse to the Inexpressible and flight from the personal "I."

To take refuge in the Inexpressible is to foster a misunderstanding that there is reason to fear is self-seeking. To express oneself, on the contrary, always means making an avowal, assuming responsibility for one's thoughts and actions. This, however, is just what the Romantics are loath to do. Hence their flight into a world about which nothing can be said. Hence, too, their need to affirm so superabundantly that it can only be spoken of through the use of allusions, metaphors and "inspired" poems. On this plane, mysticism gives birth to a most moving type of literature, but one which, it must be recognized, also reveals a malady of the person.

The paradox of the expression of the Inexpressible is so essential to Romanticism that it explains, beyond all doubt, the incapacity of most of Goethe's younger contemporaries to produce completed works. And in fact, the movement of these poets is directly opposed to that of the creator. To create is to give form, while they sought to deny all forms; to create also means posing limitations and they, on the contrary, aspired towards infinite expansion; finally, to create is to define by words and actions, whereas they sought passive silence. For the most part, too, they left only fragments, illusions, fugitive bits or "illuminations," similar to the recollections of a fading dream. How could they have brought into daylight *that* which they wanted to speak of, the Inexpressible, or the wordless discourse heard during the

night of passivity, without betraying either themselves or it? And so their work reflects the vital contradiction from which they suffered and from which sprang their anguished desire to lose their personal "I." But the personal "I" is the creative Shadow of the natural individual. Let us take one last look at our definitions.

The person is the spiritual being within us; it is answerable for our vocation and finds its unity therein, despite the contradictions from which the *individual*, that is to say, the natural being, might suffer. The individual is entirely determined by the species, environment and history he has inherited, as well as by the wounds he himself has received. He is imprisoned in these given facts and all attempt to escape them through sublimations will be vain; in the depths of Night and of the unconscious it is still himself that he continues to meet in unrecognizable guises, which he will be tempted to believe divine. And it is right that the first touches of the Spirit should render the "I" aware of its own limitations and inspire a longing to go beyond them. But only a *vocation* will give the necessary force to do this. Should one be received and should it be accepted consciously, it will constitute the introduction to an entirely new freedom. From that moment on, the "I" evolves in a manner that *in appearances* greatly resembles that of the pseudo- or pre-mystics as represented by the dream poets. That is to say, he devotes himself to something which is greater than himself, he gives himself to a reality which often takes no account of our reasons, he imposes on himself a sort of *ascesis* which liberates him from natural constraints. But this *ascesis* does not lead to the negation of the real. It transforms and re-orientes the forces of the individual, instead of seeking to destroy them. It involves him with the active world, whereas the Romantic sought to escape from it. Lastly it makes us responsible towards our fellows, and it is through this that the legitimacy of a vocation may be recognized. In fact, Theresa of Avila would accept only those revelations which led her to some practical action in daily life. Thus the "personalist *ascesis*" is radically different from the dissolution of the "I" of the Romantics. It is an activity that only begins beyond one's own death, that is to say, be-

yond renunciation of the tormented "I" by its own egoism. It doesn't take death for its goal, but rather life, and this life, here below. It accepts the "I" and all its obligations by virtue of its vocation, that is to say, of a call from elsewhere, but which concerns this world. Only a vocation of this sort can give the courage needed to make a complete avowal, in all lucidity; to express oneself without reticence, and to assume responsibility for one's own guilty "I" . . . for the reason that, in the future, it is not that which will count, but the task at hand and the One who has commanded it.

From this moment on, the guilty, despised "I" stops seeking a vain escape into the Inexpressible and the Unconscious. It dares finally to speak and to bear witness in the name of a Truth which is greater than itself. And here we return to evangelical teaching, according to which real believers are not promised inexpressible ecstasies, but are, on the contrary, urged to act and to let their faith be known. As Saint Paul said: "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

IV

COLLECTIVE REPERCUSSIONS OF ANTI-PERSONALIST ROMANTICISM

Kierkegaard criticized his time in the name of the faith of the Solitary Believer, which is the fundamental reality of all existence in the world. But if faith constitutes health for the Solitary Man, it also restores him to communication with his neighbor before God. If the health of our faith constitutes the foundation of the real person, it should do the same for the real community. And inversely, any malady of the person is bound to affect the community.

To describe thus a mass phenomenon in terms of personal etiology, would be providing the necessary counter-arguments to the Kierkegaardian analyses. Let us therefore sketch a description of the National-Socialist phenomenon, starting with the categor-

ies already defined which point to a romantic-mystic malady of the person.

In its essence, the Hitler movement appears to me to be a form of political Romanticism. Nor do I mean for a moment that the writings of Novalis or Jean Paul are at its source, which would be absurd and an insult to both poets. But I do say that, on the lower collective plane which is that of Nazi psychology, methods are to be found that are very analogous with those already described. It is not a matter of influences, but purely one of reviviscence—vulgar, over-simplified, cheap—of certain attitudes of man confronted with his fate and with his own person.

National-Socialism appeared as a defense reaction to the collective humiliation inflicted on the Germans by Versailles, by defeat, by wide-spread poverty. Here we have the *wound*, disappointment felt no longer by an individual but by the entire nation in its relationships with the world of reality. Hence the feeling of *guilt*, which could neither be accepted nor acknowledged, for reasons of national pride. The world must be awry, for in it we are maltreated, we the descendants of the virtuous Teutons! And out of this feeling of guilt, which was forcibly repressed and loudly denied, (from the beginning, all of Hitler's speeches proclaimed that the Germans had not lost the war) there was bound to result a feeling that national assurance was lacking. The real Germany could not be the Germany that had received this *wound*. Therefore, it should be sought elsewhere: in a dream of power and liberation, or in the future, which is the *Ersatz* for the beyond. Let us deny, then, this reality which oppresses us so meticulously, as also all these articles of the Treaty which accuse us, all these rules of the political game invented by rationalists, when what we want is a new passion!

And just as the Romantic forgot his despised "I" by losing himself in the festivals of the dream, the German man-in-the-street was able to forget his misfortunes and the humiliations of his country by losing himself for hours at a time in the collective soul, in the hypnosis of the sacred rites organized by the Führer to slow, spell-binding rhythms of parades and drums. . . . He

was told that he didn't count as a conscious individual; he was told that his real life was in the hands of the Party, of an anonymous, obscure demi-urge from whom hereafter, he need only receive orders in a role of absolute passivity, without making too great an effort to understand them. Now he was delivered of the terrible burden of his conscience and his doubts. Collective discipline played the role of an *ascesis*. The very renouncements that it imposed came to constitute proofs of its transcendent truth. And thus it was that the German masses, imitating the evolution of the Romantics on the lowest level, sought to recover their lost unity in a supra-personal world wherein hostile limitations were effaced, where passion could flourish and emotional intensity replaced the petty truth of the jurists. And this helps us to understand many things which, at first glance, appear to have no intimate relationships: the abolition of Roman law; the contempt for frontiers and obligations, the re-established cult of the dead, the dream of indefinite expansion, but, at the same time, the love of war (a prefiguration of death, which has always been the dream of highly impassioned natures) and the will to live shut up in an impenetrable, inexpressible, incommunicable reality, which owes no explanation to anybody: in other words, material and moral *autarchy*.

It would be impossible to insist too much on the extent to which romantic pseudo-mysticism determined the Führer's every action as well as his hypnotic power over the masses. The appearance of *Realpolitik*, which certain cynical or ingenious persons succeeded in maintaining, was unable, except very imperfectly, to dissimulate the real springs of the Hitler régime. We were no longer confronted with a Bismarck, but with an entire people spellbound by its dream; with a people which had forsworn all reason, as well as all attempt to justify itself before the eyes of the world, having found in its passion a sort of exalting innocence, a chance to sacrifice its guilty, despised "I" to something more real than life itself, in this case, its thousand-year mission. "In our country," declared Goebbels, "we do not burden the people with a number of opinions among which they must choose. The people

don't like to choose, they like to have presented to them an opinion that is correct. . . . Moreover, our political platform is a platform conceived by artists. The Führer is an artist in politics whereas other statesmen are mere hacks. His State is the product of the imagination of a genius."⁸

A politics of artists, a politics of collective Romanticism, *but tailored to the use of philistines* — such was the nightmare dreamed up by the somnambulistic Third Reich. It was more a religious than a political malady, and its causes must be sought in the most secret recesses of the German conscience, in the drama that decides the fate of each person. Indeed, this drama will always be the same, whether it involve the individual or the masses. For it is the confrontation of a religion of the collective Unconscious with a faith that seeks to manifest itself through the Word and through *personal* Action.

July, 1939.

(TRANSLATED BY MARIA JOLAS)

⁸ From a speech made in Danzig, June 18th, 1939.

Fooled in Sleep

by Robert Horan



On waking, feel the lion light
loom over you, the gaunt and graceless room,
faced squarely, wheel back bright;
the curtain part over the rocking heart.
Lifting the head up from its warm cave,
will tears swarm sudden over a lonely arm?
As rain wrecks silence or sparkles dark
so morning may be marred by memory,
marked by remembrance as an enemy.
Fooled in sleep, are you now surprised
at this pitiable, pale paradise,
the day-world wading toward you, pier by pier?
Where once you washed, so steep in sleep,
hung with a dumb weight, frozen and caught,
there, tragedy was secure and terror pure;
the beasts at last roamed back into their towns
and the remote miles of bone.
Within that ravening sleep you heralded danger
at least with a splitting cry; dodged death
in instant recognition; gathered breath.
So hope is restored at morning
with a solider despair.
You suffer pity when you wake,
widening the stone gaze to include
a signal solitude, a chalk and marble maze.
Each ghost floats forward with a famished face.
Discover yourself so deeply occupied,
so weaponless it empties terror even,
exposing a faded heaven.

As the branched sleep is broken
the tears harden, and the tongue
is tired, not yet having spoken.
As the heart shrinks and the five fingers
relax their star,
waking brings back, not where we were,
but where we are.

About The Contributors



☆ BERNARDO CLARIANA, who fought throughout the Spanish Civil War, has taught at Middlebury College, and is now a radio commentator, broadcasting to Spain; a book of his poems, *Ardiente Desnacer*, was published two years ago in Cuba. ☆ WELLER EMBLER has recently become Professor of English, in charge of the Department of Humanities at The Cooper Union. He is working on a book on American literature, which will be entitled *The Five Major Traditions in American Literature*. ☆ Poetry by ROBERT HORAN has appeared in many literary magazines. ☆ MARIA JOLAS is well known as a translator and editor. ☆ HELEN B. MACMILLAN is connected with The Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America. ☆ CARLOS MONTENEGRO is the most important contemporary Cuban prose writer. His first book, *The Sprout and Other Stories*, was written while he was in prison, serving a sentence for having killed a man in a quarrel at the age of nineteen. After his book appeared, ten years later, he was released through the efforts of Cuban and foreign writers. His work is inspired by Cuban life, and is chiefly about the poor and oppressed. ☆ DENIS DE ROUGEMONT is the author of *Love in the Western World* and *The Devil's Share*. ☆ ROBERT STALLMAN has taught at Wisconsin and Yale. His poetry and critical essays have appeared in many literary journals. ☆ JOAN STRONG is teaching at Putney School. This is her first published work. ☆ Verse by EMMA SWAN has come out in *Partisan Review*, *Furioso* and other literary magazines.

Deborah's Wheel

by Joan Strong



DEBORAH made herself creep out of the house before the other children were awake and go down to the beach alone in the early morning. For today at last a terrible monster wheel would rise and roll out of the waves and charge upon her to punish her, because she was a bad person. There was no one badness in her, which could be slapped out or cleared away by sitting for hours in a locked closet. Her badness had been planted in her before birth and had grown with her like a thorny tree. It made her mother look sadly at her, asking: "Deborah, aren't you ashamed of yourself?" And once it had made her father swoop down on her and shake her till her teeth rattled. All the adults were angry or sorrowful, for they could only remind Deborah of the shame which she always wore, like a black hood. They shook their heads since they could not help her. And the other children mockingly shook their heads and ran away. Deborah had decided that only an ever-rolling wheel out of the unknown sea could crush her wickedness, as cartwheels crushed the little scurrying ants in the road.

She had planned exactly what she must do. The wooden steps leading from the road to the sand were still hoary with night fog, and the bannister was as sleek and cold as an eel under her hand. She walked along to the point midway between the steps and the spindly boat-dock which fenced off the next beach. Then she dropped to her knees and, using her arms as shovels, scooped out a hollow in the sand. It was only large enough for her heels, but it was deep enough to cover her safely up to the waist. She settled into this nest and watched for the wheel to appear at the rim

of the sky and sea. It would leave trailing slime and sea creatures in its wake, but Deborah knew she must on no account cover her eyes or turn away. She must stand up and challenge the monster from her fortress in the sand. This alone might vanquish it and send it thundering back into the sea. If her challenge failed, she would be crushed with her badness. Deborah gripped her fists before her, and her hair swung forward like a threatening bell as she scowled over the water.

Presently there was a scuffle and shouting on the road, and she saw her brothers Peter and David storm down the bank with little Jane puffing and stumbling after. Old red-faced Mrs. Bundy, laden with beach things, descended by the steps. Deborah sat perfectly still while the bright noisy day began around her. For a while she wanted to forget the wheel and try to be a part of it.

Peter and David sprinted toward the water, tangling in a friendly battle as they ran. Mrs. Bundy called shrilly after them, but they had escaped, and she stooped to scold and pick up Jane who had crumpled in a fat pink heap and was eating sand. Deborah wondered why Mrs. Bundy always scolded the other children, for they seemed like angels with no darkness in them. Mrs. Bundy seldom scolded Deborah; she only looked at her in a puzzled way and called her a strange child. Deborah wished she could run and fight with her brothers, or be a baby like Jane, but she could only stare back at Mrs. Bundy, knowing that her own eyes showed the darkness in her.

At this moment the people from next door trooped out on the other side of the boat-dock, and Deborah stiffened with dread. For as usual her enemies, Billy and John, scuttled under the pier and emerged close by. They were dressed for battle. John had made a sash of his towel, and had strapped his trusty wooden blade over his stomach. He stood like a toadstool and gazed proudly around from under his cowboy hat. But Billy saw Deborah and darted forward, flicking his new striped whip.

"There sits a hen in the middle of the fen!" he chanted, and ran wild with laughter. Peter and David splashed out of the water.

"Deborah's laying eggs!" shouted Billy, and they all clustered around.

"What are you doing?"

Deborah looked soberly at each of their curious flushed faces. Their eyes danced and teased.

"I am watching the sea," she said with dignity.

"Why?" they asked. But their faces were like thick blank moons, and Billy was poking away the edge of her hollow with his whip. Deborah felt hot shivers up her spine and her throat and eyes were stinging.

"A wheel is going to come out of the sea today," she murmured, wishing they would go away.

"What sort of a wheel?" demanded John.

"What's it made of?"

"When? Where is it now?" demanded her brothers.

"It's only a garbage wheel off a garbage truck!" cried Billy. "And you're just a garbagy old hen!" He brought the whip down with a crack on her shoulder, and went careening gleefully away like a gull over the beach. The rest followed, and Deborah shrank down low, gripping her shoulder until the raw pain stopped. She did not care to join the others any more, for they had all shown themselves to be her bitter enemies. She was more anxious than ever for the wheel to come and prove whether she should have been born, but first she wanted to pay back her enemies. She sat still to wait for a good chance.

The other children began to build a castle by the sea. Deborah watched them circle busily around, plastering up the wet sides and studding them with pebbles. They dug a moat with a channel for the longest and lowest waves to enter. Each one shouted and obeyed his own orders, but in some wonderful way they all built together and allowed each other room. Deborah thought that if she were there, she would have to fight hard to help with the castle. Absorbed in watching, she barely noticed the procession of adults who came down the steps and settled in a distant warm company around Mrs. Bundy and Jane.

Billy shouted suddenly, pranced around the finished castle,

and planted his whip like a flag in the turret. "I shall be king of the castle! I shall be king of the castle!" he sang out.

At this Deborah forgot about her wheel. A rage started inside her like a fiery ball, and it swelled and burned until she got up slowly, stepped firmly out of her hollow, and stalked down the beach. She halted a few paces from the dancing Billy and said: "I will be the king. You have to be my servant!" Billy stopped, arms raised like a clown in mid-air, his mouth hanging open.

"No!" he roared, recovering himself.

"We can let her be queen," ventured David in a scared voice.

"I won't have any king!" raged Deborah. "I will be king of you all, everybody, and you must be my slaves!" She trampled the moat and flung herself at the turret to seize the flag.

"Get down, Deborah! Get away!" they shrieked, and dragged at her arms and legs. John had lost his hat and sword, but he leapt forward, aiming at Deborah with his heavy towel, but hitting everyone. At last the lot of them jumped in a frenzied half-frightened pile onto Deborah and pounded and kicked her into the ruined castle until she lay flat.

The adults came down and surrounded them in a tall ring. Voices rose, and Deborah felt a silent void around her as the children were snatched away. The darkness churned her head, and hot rage rolled and flooded her insides. In a strange sudden fear she looked up. There was the monster turning in the sea, swallowing waves into itself until it made a great black wheel, thrashing the water. Deborah scrambled to her feet and hurled herself against the bewildered wall of adults.

"The wheel! The wheel!" she screamed, and beat her head in the sand. "Oh why am I so terrible!" The adults' legs stood like a forest. "Let me go back to my hollow!" But the forest did not move and the wheel came on from the horizon. With one more effort, Deborah pulled herself up and chased straight into the sea, running until the heavy water rose about her and thundered over her head.

* * *

She awoke in the bedroom where the adults had carried her and laid her on top of the clear white sheets. The evening wind ballooned the curtains against the low sun. There was whispering in the hall, and the odor of medicine pierced the air.

"She is awake now," said her mother's voice from outside, and moon-like heads peered in at once. Her brothers and Billy and John entered in a solemn parade and stood in a row at the bedside. Billy stepped forward, all red in the face and twisting like a jack in its box, and laid his whip on the sheet. He glanced sideways and said carefully: "You can be king if you want." Then John presented his hat which they had been trampling in the fight after all.

"There wasn't really any wheel, you know," said Billy. "We thought you were pretending, but your mother said you imagined it was real."

"Did it really seem real?" asked John in a wondering tone. Deborah nodded.

"Didn't you watch it go back into the sea?" she asked. But they shook their heads and gazed at her as though they had never seen her before.

"Mother says you can come down to supper when you feel better," said David, "and you can sit at the head of the table." They turned and filed out in a jerky way, to be received by the adults waiting in the hall.

Deborah looked peacefully at the hat and whip she had won, and tried to remember how it felt to be crushed by the wheel. She wondered if it would stay at the bottom of the sea forever.

F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Future

by Weller Embler



IN 1913 Randolph Bourne, a young literary radical at Columbia, published a book called *Youth and Life*. Ostensibly the purpose of the book was to give young people their rightful place in the sun, a place long shadowed by the Victorian apotheosis of unlyrical middle age; the effect of the book was to give courage and inspiration to the younger generation in its quarrel with aged Victorian values. But between the lines of rhetoric and reasoning was an intuition. Bourne sensed that youth would respond only to a social aim which should be full of their own lyric idealism, and he knew that their devotion would in turn give definition to their existence during an era of social change and lost values. Full of a rebellious energy, Bourne pitted himself against the old tyrannies and the old conventions of a philistine America, striving to make a new world which should enjoy not least among its blessings the secret of perpetual youth.

Then followed the war, and presently, when they were not much more than twenty years old themselves, a new younger generation, the next remove from Randolph Bourne, entered the 1920's. This was a perpetual youth but different indeed from what Bourne had looked forward to. They were young, they were ardent, but something desperate had happened to their ideals. The new generation enjoyed the freedom which Bourne had prescribed, but it also enjoyed a bad case of post-war disillusion. The young were getting themselves good and drunk on Scotch or Canadian ale and subsequently good and maudlin over their world of muddle values. The something fine and noble

which had recommended itself to earlier idealists had lost its charm and its validity for them; instead, their hope was to be beautiful, and to let the world be damned. Their heart's desire was to spend their fortunes and to burn with a bright bitter flame on the altar of experience. To experiment with sensations, to feel deeply if not exquisitely, to live avidly, but mostly to be "lost"—this was all their pleasure.

The "lost generation" has already become history, and the recent publication in book form of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Crack-up* (together with other uncollected pieces, including letters and tributes)* will refer the reader to this world-weary youth of the 1920's. No writer of this period pictured the lost generation more vividly or more lastingly than Fitzgerald, and it is a question whether Fitzgerald did not perhaps create the jazz age and the league of despairing youth. In any event, it is a commonplace of criticism that Fitzgerald knew his subject matter thoroughly and at first hand. He has had a large following among readers who appreciate good writing, much larger, I suspect, than he ever guessed; and anything from his pen is dear to them.

The writings collected together to form the volume, taking its title rather unfortunately from the despondent essay which appeared first in *Esquire* in 1936, will be to admirers of Fitzgerald something more it is to be hoped than memorabilia of a bygone day. On the whole, however, the book is put together in such a way as to suggest that the good old days, the days of precious weariness, were after all and in their way lovely. The tone is set by Edmund Wilson in his poem dedicatory, and it prevails through the letters, sketches, and selected tributes, with the notable exception of the letter from Gertrude Stein and the appreciative essay (1925) by Paul Rosenfeld. Perhaps these are all the literary remains we are to have of Fitzgerald, and perhaps there is no mood other than the nostalgic and wistful in which they could very well have been edited. But it is unfair to Fitz-

* *The Crack-up*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald. With Other Uncollected Pieces, Notebooks, and Unpublished Letters. Edited by Edmund Wilson. New York: New Directions. 1945. 347 pp., \$3.50.

gerald that he should be read always as the spokesman for the febrile gay and the merely sad.

Most of Fitzgerald's undergraduate readers and not a few of his more adult readers (with the undergraduate frame of mind) have been charmed solely by his sophomoric varieties of melancholy. If Byron had been read only for his "Stanzas for Music"—"There's not a joy"—we should never at this date have heard of him. It should be clear by now that the characters in Fitzgerald's short stories are not so uncommon. His young people are given to adoleseing after the manner of youth in any decade. The most unusual thing about them is that Fitzgerald should have devoted so much of his talent to describing them. Often his characters are sentimental and uninteresting; at worst they are simply callow; and the situations are, comparatively speaking, rather tame. I should not like to see Fitzgerald left to the hands of the sad young men, or he will perish with them. He himself was something more than a perennial sophomore. He was more than a writer symptomatic merely of a restless decade.

F. Scott Fitzgerald will endure as an artist and writer because he wrote beautifully and lyrically about a timeless subject—the self. His writings are documentary evidence of a stage in the agonizing demise in America of consistent selfhood; and in the modern age there is no riddle more all-consuming for the lyrical writer than the question, "Who am I?"

If a young writer has a traditional way of thinking about himself and the world in which he lives, it is not difficult for him to answer the question, "Who am I?" In fact, it does not occur to him to ask the question. His is obviously a central existence with many lines of reference radiating to him from a meaningful round of activities. But if the young writer does not enjoy a traditional way of thinking about himself and his world, or if that way of thinking has been examined and found wanting in essential integrity, then he is, at least for the moment, lost, or, as a modern psychologist would say, maladjusted. The fact is that there is nothing for him to adjust himself to. The lines of reference are completely obliterated.

The one tradition in America to which F. Scott Fitzgerald and many of his contemporaries were inclined both by ancestry and by temperament was puritan individualism, and puritan individualism had been examined and found wanting. In addition, Fitzgerald and his contemporaries existing, as they were, between two worlds, were incapable of creating a new concept of individualism; the result was that Fitzgerald's search for his real "self" came eventually to be a moral inner compulsion to symbolic self-destruction.

For the most part William James with his pragmatic emphasis on *will* followed closely in the tradition of protestant individualism; but curiously enough, he may be said to have contributed as much as any other philosopher to the structural breakdown of single selfhood. In his *Psychology* he devotes Chapter XII to a study of the self. At the outset he distinguishes between "the self as known, or the me, the 'empirical ego' as it is sometimes called," and "the self as knower, or the I, the 'pure ego' of certain authors." (Of "certain authors," forsooth!) He then goes on to discriminate between several selves: the material me, the social me, and the spiritual me. Moreover, there exists, he says, a rivalry and a conflict of the different me's; in fact the me's have set themselves in a "*hierarchical scale, with the bodily me at the bottom, the spiritual me at the top, and the extra-corporeal material selves and various social selves between.*" Nor is that sufficient distinction. James continues, saying, "*In each kind of Me, material, social, and spiritual, men distinguish between the immediate and actual, and the remote and potential.*"

Although William James was quite willing to admit the Soul into psychology, and especially on the basis of the "sense" of personal identity, observing a "sameness of the self as known" and a "sameness in the self as knower," nevertheless it is with the "states of consciousness," he insists, that psychology is primarily concerned. "*Metaphysics or theology may prove the Soul to exist; but for psychology the hypothesis of such a substantial principle of unity is superfluous.*" This is an accommodating disclaimer for one bred to an analysis of a quite different kind.

It is the "stream of consciousness" that takes precedence in the scientific observation of the mind; and the single self, with its "sense" of personal identity, is left to work out such a poor destiny as it can afford under the aegis of metaphysics and theology.

But many a modern writer has not been satisfied to let the "fundamental" self pass quietly into the history of protestant theology. The desire to possess and be aware of an inner self is deep in the blood stream; and many twentieth-century writers have devoted their careers to searching feverishly for their lost identity, going to and fro about the earth shining their lanterns darkly in the face of how many strange and grotesque creatures.

This search has been characterized by a curious psychological phenomenon. In order to find the "real" self, all the pseudo selves have had, as it were, to be destroyed one after another. In the ruthless elimination the "real" self becomes of necessity the last self. But at the end of the day, to speak figuratively, when one has found the last self and sits quietly for a while with it—much as Josiah Royce did with the Absolute—it seems to vanish like a dream, and in the morning is discovered to have shattered again into the many. Thus continues the process of elimination endlessly.

If, however, that last self, the real self could be captured in its utter solitude, it would be the perfect unity which the puritan individualist is ever mysteriously propelled to discover, and there would be little left for it but the grave. In its utter self-sufficiency and singleness it could not abide except as a god. And the writer who toils to search each chamber of his being for the everlasting "self" that resides somewhere within finds at the last that only an indescribable loneliness is left to him.

Among American writers one thinks of Conrad Aiken and his masquerade of characters. There is Festus who, at the near-end of his long journey into the world-which-is-himself, finds that he is his own god. But it is Festus, too, who, after the long journey is over, discovers that all there is to life is to journey again and again, to try to solve a riddle which has no answer. And there is Senlin, as Houston Peterson has observed, who "goes in eternal

pursuit trying to capture the secret of self. He has found only that he is 'a city,' 'a door,' that his is a complicated personality. . . . He becomes the symbol of incertitudes. He is everything but himself." Conrad Aiken's world of shadowy selves is the discovery of the individualist who finds that he is not an identity but a mingling of many visions in a *danse macabre*.

The early poems of Archibald MacLeish are a persevering exploration of the many mansions of the soul, but in the *Hamlet of A. MacLeish*, for instance, he does not find that each grows more stately, as another poet once averred, but rather that each lights up separately like the homes in a village at dusk, some of them showing weak and yellow in decayed and rickety structures.

There is Eugene O'Neill who has probed the many selves of his many-selved characters; and where at last do they find themselves? The Emperor Jones discards one after another the garments of civilization until he is once more a naked savage going down into the grave primeval. Yank leaves behind him one self after another until there is left only the beast in the cage—and the grave. Which is the real Lavinia? It is she who closes finally the tomb-like door of her tomb-like ancestral home and passes forever out of the sight of men.

But among modern writers F. Scott Fitzgerald best illustrates the agonized search for the true inner self. It was in his first book, *This Side of Paradise*, that Fitzgerald began to look for the "fundamental" Amory, and from then on through all his stories and novels the search continues. The essential conflict throughout all his books is that of a man divided against himself, and the tragedy lies in the theme of destruction which Fitzgerald used as the agent in his search for the real self. But the real self and all the other selves are doomed from the start, as though they had been Calvinistically determined.

At the end of *This Side of Paradise* Amory Blaine goes back to Princeton and finds that "All Gods are dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken." Because universal standards, categories for measurement and belief were denied him, because there was no Mosaic Code to follow, but rather a confusion of values, de-

struction seemed to be the historical necessity of the moment, the only instrument with which to probe for the enduring and the real. Fitzgerald destroys his generation. He kills Gatsby, makes him dupe of a bizarre and evil world. Fitzgerald destroys himself, regularly, rhythmically, as it were a ritual, a lustral bath, almost, in hopes of being purified into a central self. He wants above all things to control his destiny, but he has faith only in the inevitability of collapse.

In *Tender Is the Night* schizophrenia is his theme, and he deals with it brilliantly. What compulsion, what flaw in the character of Dick Diver is it that drives him on inevitably toward spiritual collapse? It is his quest of individuality. Dick is all that is noble and fine; he is also a moral weakling. He is kind and cruel, loyal and contemptuous, insolent and melancholy, courageous and cowardly, forceful and weak, proud of himself, disgusted with himself, detached and yet drawn in. His was a longing for a unified selfhood, and everywhere was disunity—in his wife, his friends, his generation, his age. At the last he goes to pieces, is desolate and lonely and lost to the world.

In "The Rich Boy," one of Fitzgerald's best short stories, the main character, Hunter, is active, gracious, thoughtful, dependable; he is also depressed with ennui, boorish, irresponsible, and spiritually despondent—many persons weary with the search for the one. Where is the "fundamental" Amory? Fitzgerald exhausted himself and all his characters in the devastating inquiry.

And in *The Last Tycoon* the theme of destruction prevails. Cecilia says that Stahr is losing his battle with schizophrenia. Not a single character who does not go to pieces. Wylie White's career had reached a dead end. Manny Schwartz shot a bullet into his head, and somebody played "Lost" on the juke box. Minna Davis is dead and quickly forgotten; Pete Zarvas has gone to pot and attempts suicide; Roderiguez is "through"; Marcus is slipping, and Brady has fallen. Kathleen has been educated to the end that she might read Spengler, and the grunion throw themselves away, "relentless and exalted and scornful" upon the beach. Cecilia ends in a sanitarium with consumption, and Stahr,

deathly tired, "ruling with a radiance that is moribund" loses his power. In love with "Minna and death together," he beats his wings "finally frantically" like the plane in which he rides, and then falls to his death. Fitzgerald had planned to end the novel with a funeral, and I think of that funeral which he did not live to write as the consummate symbol of decadent individualism today. All is evil, all must be destroyed before the self can reign again pure and alone. Where is the fundamental Amory? Fitzgerald could find him only in the wreckage of the grave.

Fitzgerald may have written a good deal about the sacred stages of whelphood, but his stature is not to be determined by his occasional doggerel. He was representative of lyric youth in any age looking for its place in the sun. For him the question "Who am I?" could not be answered. And to destroy is the oldest and easiest way of asserting one's SELF. If there is no traditional philosophy of individualism worth accepting, if there is no social aim to give definition to young lives, there will come, along with the breakdown of old values, a moral inner compulsion to self-destruction, so that the many may be shattered in the hope that the one will remain.

Walt Whitman expressed the fundamental issue of democracy when he began his *Leaves of Grass* with the lines that have since become famous and which are to some people still an expression of conceit:

ONE'S-SELF I sing, a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

In the word En-Masse lies the answer to the riddle, and by that word Whitman meant universal compassion. Fitzgerald had generous sympathies for his generation, but his generation was powerless to learn the meaning of a comprehensive humanity. The "Twenties" will not repeat themselves ever. No age can be lived over again. But I think that the future may not be unlike the past if the concept of individualism is not made consistent with a universal compassion.

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